

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A stackable shipping pod adapted for use on a relatively large object having a bottom surface with a plurality of bores therein, each bore for receiving a threaded member, and further having an outside perimeter, the shipping pod comprising:

a top wall for mating to the bottom surface of the large object, the top wall having at least one opening through which the threaded member is extended for attaching the shipping pod to the large object; and

a perimeter wall extending downwardly and outwardly from the top wall, the perimeter wall having exterior surface facing away from the top wall and an interior surface facing inward.

wherein the interior surface of the shipping pod nests proximate to the exterior surface of a second subjacent shipping pod when in a stacked orientation.

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2. The shipping pod of claim 1 wherein the top wall includes at least one anti-slip member for contacting the bottom surface of the large object.

3. The shipping pod of claim 2 wherein the at least one anti-slip member includes a grommet disposed in the at least one opening of the top wall.

4. The shipping pod of claim 2, wherein the at least one anti-slip member includes a plurality of protrusions disposed on an upper surface of the top wall.

5. The shipping pod of claim 1 wherein the perimeter wall is sized to extend beyond the outside perimeter of the large object.

6. The shipping pod of claim 1 wherein the top wall includes an undersurface having a plurality of ribs.

7. The shipping pod of claim 1 wherein the shipping pod has a rectangular shape.

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1 8. The shipping pod of claim 1 further comprising an outer
2 perimeter wall extending upwardly and outwardly from the perimeter wall.

1 9. The shipping pod of claim 8 wherein the outer perimeter wall
2 extends beyond the outside perimeter of the relatively large object.

1 10. The shipping pod of claim 8 wherein the outer perimeter wall
2 includes a handle portion for handling the shipping pod.

1 11. The shipping pod of claim 8 further comprising a bottom wall
2 ~~connecting the perimeter wall and the outer perimeter wall.~~

1 *Sub 2* 12. A shipping pod adapted for use on vending machines having
2 a bottom surface with at least one aperture therein to receive corresponding threaded
3 members and an outside perimeter, the shipping pod comprising:

4 a top wall for mating to the bottom surface of a vending machine, the
5 top wall having an opening for receiving the threaded member therein for attaching
6 the shipping pod to the vending machine;

7 an inner perimeter wall extending downwardly and outwardly from
8 the top wall; and

9 an outer perimeter wall spaced apart from the inner perimeter wall and
10 attached thereto, the outer perimeter wall and inner perimeter wall defining a pocket
11 therebetween.

1 13. The shipping pod of claim 12 further comprising a plurality of
2 gussets for attaching the inner perimeter wall and the outer perimeter wall and
3 extending in the pocket therebetween.

1 14. The shipping pod of claim 12 wherein the top wall includes at
2 least one anti-slip member adapted to contact the bottom surface of the vending
3 machine and prevent rotation of the shipping pod.

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1 15. The shipping pod of claim 14 wherein the at least one anti-slip
2 member includes a grommet received in the opening of the top wall.

1 16. The shipping pod of claim 14 wherein the at least one anti-slip
2 member includes a plurality of protrusions on an upper surface thereof.

1 17. The shipping pod of claim 12 further wherein the top wall
2 includes an undersurface having a plurality of ribs for providing strength to thereto.

1 18. The shipping pod of claim 12, further comprising a bottom
2 wall for connecting the inner perimeter wall and outer perimeter wall.

1 19. A stackable shipping pod for use on a relatively large object
2 having a bottom surface with a plurality of bores therein, each bore for receiving a
3 threaded member, the large object further having an outside perimeter, the shipping
4 pod comprising:

5 a planar upper wall member having an upper surface for mating with
6 the bottom surface of the large object, the upper wall member having an opening
7 through which the threaded member is extended; and

8 a sidewall member wall extending downwardly from the periphery of
9 the upper wall member, the sidewall member and upper wall member defining a
10 compartment therebetween,

11 wherein in a stacked orientation, the compartment of the shipping pod
12 receives therein the upper wall of a second shipping pod.

1 20. The shipping pod of claim 19 wherein the sidewall member has
2 a double-wall construction, having an inner wall member and outer wall member
3 spaced apart from each other.

1 21. The shipping pod of claim 19 wherein the upper wall member
2 includes at least one anti-slip member adapted to contact the bottom surface of the
3 vending machine and prevent rotation of the shipping pod.

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Figures 7 and 8 illustrates shipping pod 110 in a nested orientation with a similar shipping pod 110', in which similar features between the pods are designated by a like reference number having a prime (') designation. As shown in Figures 7 and 8, when shipping pods 110 and 110' are stacked, interior surface 118 of the top shipping pod 110' nests proximate exterior surface 116' of a subjacent shipping pod 110' thereby reducing the required storage space when shipping pods 110 and 110' are not in use.

Referring still to the cross-sectional view of Figure 8, shipping pod 110 includes a bottom wall 120 or surface connected to inner perimeter wall 114, which said bottom wall 120 extends outwardly from the inner perimeter wall 114 and generally parallel with top wall 111. An outer perimeter wall 122, is connected to bottom wall 120 and includes a top edge 124. Outer wall 122 is relatively shorter than inner perimeter wall 114, and preferably is tapered, extending upwardly and outwardly from bottom wall 120. The transitions between the various walls are shown as fillets. Of course, wall 122 may also extend inwardly or perpendicular from bottom wall 120.

Referring now to Figure 10, a third embodiment of the shipping pod is shown therein as pod 210. Pod 210 has features similar to the embodiments shown in Figures 1-8 but with a "2" prefix on the reference numbers. A plurality of drainage holes or openings 240 are be included in bottom wall 220 to permit water or other fluid to drain out of the shipping pod, such as during washing or exposure to wet environments. Of course, such openings 240 may also be positioned within the walls or the upper surface 211 of pod 210 for serving the desired purpose. Pod 210 further includes additional gussets 231 in the area adjacent handle portion 230 in order to provide additional strength to the pod 210 in these areas.

Referring now to Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14, shown therein is a fourth embodiment of the shipping pod according to the present invention, shown as pod 310, which is similar to the second embodiment illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, with similar features having like reference numbers with "3" prefix added thereto. Pod 310 includes another anti-slip member or anti-rotational member 334, illustrated in

Figures 11-14 as a grommet 335. Top wall 311 includes an elongated grommet 335 which is inserted in and received by opening 312. The upper portion of grommet 335 is disposed on top surface 311 and extends about opening 312. Grommet 335 is a standard part which is preferably formed from a soft rubber material and acts like a cushion to absorb energy and prevent rotation of the shipping pod when installed on vending machine 5 (see Figure 9).

The embodiments shown herein illustrate a shipping pod with four inner perimeter walls 14. It is contemplated, however, that the shipping pods may function and be operable according to the present invention by having only two opposing inner perimeter walls 14 (and therefore two opposing bottom walls 20 and two opposing outer perimeter walls 22, where appropriate) without deviating from the scope of this invention.

In operation, vending machine 5 is either tilted or lifted so that the fasteners holding the vending machine leveling feet in place can be removed. Bolt 8 is then inserted through opening 112, as shown in Figure 9, and threaded into the bore 3 in the bottom of vending machine 5. All four leveling feet are replaced by the shipping pods according to the present invention in this manner. It is further contemplated that shipping pods 10, 110, 210, 310 may be used not only for shipping, but also when the vending machine is operable and in service.

Shipping pods 10, 110, 210, 310 may be rectangular (as illustrated herein), square, round, elliptical, or any other shape as dictated by the specific use. It is noted that the pods disclosed herein are generally symmetrical about their longitudinal centerline. The size of the pod, of course, should correspond proportionally to the size of the object or vending machine 5 on which it is used. As an example for illustrative purposes only, a rectangular shipping pod may have an overall length of 10 inches, a width of 6 inches, and a height of 3.25 inches. Opening 12 may be 4 inches long. A square shipping pod may have a length of 6 inches, a width of 6 inches, and a height of 3.25 inches. The length and width of shipping pod 10 may be such that the shipping pod extends beyond the outer perimeter of vending machine 5 (see Figure 9) thereby preventing adjacent vending